



PHYSICIAN'S DUTY*

- Complete the medical certification of cause of death within 72 hours of patient death
- Responsibility applies to deaths from natural causes and when current care was provided within past 18 months**
- Providers are not subject to civil liability or professional disciplinary action, if completed in good faith

* Provider's responsibilities are specified in Arizona Revised Statutes §36-301 and §36-325.

** "current care" means that a health care provider has examined, treated or provided care for a person for a chronic or acute condition within eighteen months preceding that person's death.

WHEN TO REFER CASES TO THE MEDICAL EXAMINER (ME)?

According to state law*, you should refer a case to the ME when the death:

- Results from violence
- Occurs suddenly when in apparent good health
- Is in a prison or that of a prisoner
- Is suspicious, unusual or unnatural in manner
- Is related to occupation or employment
- Is a public health hazard
- Is in association with or result of an anesthetic or surgical procedure
- Involves an unidentifiable body

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<http://www.azdhs.gov>

Health and Wellness for all Arizonans

PHYSICIAN CERTIFICATION OF CAUSE OF DEATH

FREE CME ONLINE COURSE



TRAINING FOR PHYSICIANS

The Arizona Dept of Health Services offers a one-hour **online course** for physicians, NPs, and PAs. It covers:

- Death certification process
- Roles of the funeral director, hospitals, health departments, medical examiners, and providers
- Practical examples
- Provides 1 hour of free CME

WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF DEATH STATEMENT?

It is your best medical opinion as to the conditions that led to the patient's death:

- It generally contains the condition(s) immediately preceding death
- It must list the underlying condition that led to the death
- It lists associated and contributing conditions

HOW CAN YOU ACCESS THE COURSE?

Step 1:

<http://azdhs.gov/cme>

Step 2:

Click on "Register Online"

Step 3:

Register for a Greater Valley Area Health Education Center account

Step 4:

Choose the Course, "Documenting Cause of Death: Why Bother?"



IMPORTANCE OF ACCURATE CAUSE OF DEATH

- Provides closure for the family
- Crucial for family medical history
- Monitors the impact of state and federal health programs
- Guides healthcare funding priorities

QUESTIONS?

CONTACT YOUR COUNTY VITAL RECORDS OFFICE

<http://azdhs.gov/vital-records/county-contacts>